

The Chat



Newsletter of the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, serving East Central Indiana

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Nov./Dec. 2013

November 11

Conservation Awards Banquet

Join us for a very special evening as we honor the 2013 recipients of our chapter's annual conservation awards. This year's banquet is set for **Monday, Nov. 11, at 6 pm**, at the **Westminster Presbyterian Church** (2801 W. Riverside Ave., at the corner of Tillotson and Riverside in Muncie).

The evening will begin with dinner, followed by door prizes, presentation of the awards, and a brief program with photos from each award winner.

The buffet-style meal will be catered by Judy Baker, who has 45 years of catering experience. The menu is as

follows: meat or vegetarian lasagna, green beans, garlic toast, tossed salad, fruit pies, and beverages.

Tickets are **\$12.50**, and **reservations are due by November 4**.

Advance payments can be sent to Robert Williams (4600 W. Bradford Drive, Muncie, IN 47304), or you may pay at the door. Contact Sarah McKillip with any questions at 765-287-8464 or sarahmckillip@gmail.com.

This is an inspiring, fun-filled evening, so please join us and bring your friends and family!

December 9

The IDNR Reintroduction Project

The bald eagle was removed from Indiana's endangered species list in 2008. The peregrine falcon was removed in October this year. With luck, the same will be true of ospreys in the coming years.

For more than two decades, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources has been working successfully to bring back these three

species – and others – that disappeared from Indiana long ago, thanks to habitat loss and pesticides like DDT.

The man behind most of these success stories over the last two decades is Dr. John Castrale, a nongame bird biologist with the IDNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife. At our regular December program meeting, John will talk about bird reintroduction projects in Indiana, especially those of bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and ospreys.

Join us on **Monday, Dec. 9**, at **Kennedy Library**. Chapter business will begin at **7 pm**. John's program will get underway at **7:15**.



Peregrine Falcon No Longer Endangered in Indiana!

Indiana took the peregrine falcon off the state endangered species list on Oct. 13.

This successful reintroduction project began in 1991, when the Indiana Department of

Natural Resources released 15 young peregrines in Indianapolis. Over the next three years, 60 young birds were released in several areas of the state.

By 2001, peregrine falcons were producing 9 to 14 successful nests each year. In 2012, 38 chicks fledged from 14 nests, and this past summer the news was even better: 17 nesting pairs, in 24 locations across the state, produced 46 hatchlings.

Learn the full success story in John Castrale's presentation at our Dec. 9 meeting!



News & Upcoming Events

Field Trip: Summit Lake – Saturday, November 23



Join us for a wonderful day observing migratory waterfowl at Summit Lake. We'll meet at the intersection of Henry County Roads 500 E and 750 N at **10 am** on Nov. 23.

Carpoolers will leave from the Cooper Science parking lot (on Ball State University's campus) at **9:15 am**.

To get there on your own: From Muncie, head south on U.S. 35. Just before the small town of Mt. Pleasant, turn right on Buck Creek Rd. Follow it to a "T" in the road and turn right, onto CR 750 N. Go to the first intersection and turn left, onto 500 E. We'll gather along that road.

Chapter-Only Memberships & Renewals due Jan. 1

RCAS now accepts credit cards!

To **become a new member** of our Audubon chapter or **renew** your chapter-only membership, you now have two choices:

You can send your dues (basic membership is \$20/year), to Phyllis De Smet, Membership Chair, 2884 S. Blaine Pike, Portland, IN, 47371. Be sure to include your address, phone number, and email address.

Or you now can **join or renew**

online, either with a major credit card or PayPal account. Simply visit us at www.cooperaudubon.org, select a membership level, and click "Donate."

If you have any questions, please contact our treasurer, Robert Williams, at robertjwilliams@earthlink.net.

Remember that you can join our chapter two different ways: 1) by

joining the National Audubon Society (NAS), which automatically makes you a member of our local chapter, or 2) by opting for chapter-only membership, separate from *or in addition to* your NAS membership. Chapter-only members do not receive the *Audubon* magazine, but every penny of their membership dues goes to our local chapter.)

Book Sale: Donations and volunteers needed – December 13 & 14

Our chapter is teaming up with the BSU chapter of the American Society for Microbiology to hold a book sale in the Ball State Alumni Center on **Dec. 13 and 14** (Friday and Saturday) from **9 am to 6 pm each day**.

To make the sale a success, we need your donations! You can bring your hardcover books, softcover books, DVDs, and CDs to the Nov. 11 banquet.

Volunteers are also needed for the event, to work in two-hour shifts on both days of the sale. If interested and available, please contact Sarah McKillip, at 765-287-8464 or sarahrmckillip@gmail.com.

If you're a fan of fiction, nonfiction, biography, mystery, religious, vintage, or any other genre you could possibly imagine, you're likely to find something special during this two-day event.

Hardbacks will sell for \$2, paperbacks for \$1, and textbooks (less than 4 years old only) for \$3. A wide assortment of vintage books, dating back to the mid-1800s, will be available.

Proceeds from the book sale will be split evenly between the Robert Cooper Audubon Society and the BSU Student Chapter of the American Society for Microbiology.



Nov./Dec. Bird of the Month: Snow Goose

Chen Caerulescens
By Helen Twibell



The snow goose has one of two plumage colors, white (snow) or gray/blue (blue), hence the common description as "snows" and "blues." These two colors of geese were once thought to be separate species, but the two plumage colors are genetically controlled. The white phase is homozygous recessive, while the dark phase comes from a single dominant gene. (In other words, a plumage color is retained throughout life and is not related to the age or sex of the individual, according to Sibley.)

White-morph birds are white except for black wing tips. Blue-morph geese have bluish-gray plumage, except on the head, neck and tail. Both are slightly smaller than Canada geese. Young birds live with their parents until they typically select a lifelong mate of their parents' coloring at around two years. If the product of a mixed pair, the young may choose either color phase for a mate.

In May of the third year, females usually return to the place where they were born to breed. The nest is generally placed in flat marshy tundra near the coast or near a pond, often in a colony. The nest is a cup-shaped mass of moss lined with fine grasses and down and may be used yearly. The six eggs are dull white.

The young leave the nest shortly after hatching and feed themselves

while the parents watch over them. They stay with the family until they are 2 to 3 years old.

Snow geese breed on the tundra of northern Canada, northwest Greenland, the Arctic Islands, and coast of northeast Siberia from May to mid-August. Then they spend more than half the year migrating to and from warmer wintering areas along the East Coast, southern states, and Mexico.

During migration, large flocks of snow geese fly so high they can barely be seen for more than 3,000 miles. Even at this distance they can be identified by the shifting curved lines and arcs they form as they fly, or by a high-pitched yelping call that sounds like *bow-wow* or *howk-howk*.

The large flocks of migrating geese visit stubble fields for leftover grain or feed on pasture grasses, young grain shoots, and roots of rushes and marsh grasses with their thick, serrated bills. An abundance of farmers' waste grain, plus the added protection of refuges, has helped increase the survival of the birds and increase the population dramatically.

With thousands of birds feeding at once, an area can quickly become a wallow of mud, floating plant debris, droppings, and feathers. The waste imperils all other bird species, and the resulting odor can carry for miles.

In the 1950s and beyond, the "wavies" – as the geese are sometimes called, because of the Chippewa name for the species, *wewe* – still formed an important part of the food supply of the Eskimos and American Indians. In the early part of the season, Eskimos would gather the eggs by the thousands, and later, when the birds were molting and couldn't fly, they would drive the birds into crude corrals to be killed for food and down.

Farther south in early fall, American Indians took a heavy toll by shooting the geese in areas of high

concentration. In spite of the slaughter, they continue to be the most abundant goose in North America.

The present count of snow geese runs into the millions, possibly increasing by five percent each year. To help control the booming population and the species' destructive impact on fragile Arctic habitats, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service established a spring hunting season for the bird.

American hunters have slowly decreased the numbers of snow geese with liberal season lengths and legal use of electronic callers, unplugged guns, and unlimited allowances during the hunting season. The goal is to reduce the populations to less than a million in the Arctic.

Here in the Tri-State area, all it takes to hunt snow geese is a valid state waterfowl stamp, a valid state hunting license, and, in Indiana and Kentucky, a special permit. The permit is free at any Fish and Wildlife Area such as Hovey Lake near Mt. Vernon or Sugar Ridge. All Indiana counties are open for hunting except Muscatatuck Refuge and Twin Oaks Refuge. Shooting times are a half-hour before sunset to a half-hour after sunset, and hunters must use non-toxic shot.

Obviously, the conservation status of the snow goose is "of least concern."

The Christmas Bird

Count is scheduled for **December 14**. Full details will be provided on our Facebook page and website (www.cooperaudubon.org).

Contact Robert Williams at robertjwilliams@earthlink.net if you'd like to participate in this important and fun event!

Robert Cooper Audubon Society

Robert Cooper Audubon Society
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Dates for Your Calendar

- Nov. 4:** Reservations due for banquet
- Nov. 11:** Conservation awards banquet
- Nov. 23:** Summit Lake field trip
- Dec. 9:** IDNR reintroduction project program
- Dec. 13 & 14:** Book sale
- Dec. 14:** Christmas Bird Count
- Jan. 1:** Chapter membership renewals due

Chapter Website: www.cooperaudubon.org

Email: cooperaudubon@gmail.com

Program meetings are held on the second Monday of each month (except July, August, & September) at the

Muncie Public Library Kennedy Branch

1700 W. McGalliard Rd., Muncie, IN



7:00 pm: chapter business

7:15 pm: scheduled program

The Chat is published 5 times a year by the Robert Cooper Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society, serving Blackford, Delaware, Grant, Henry, Jay, Madison, and Randolph Counties.

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